

ON THE ROAD TO WELLNESS

North Dakota Disability Health Project

Promoting the health
and wellness of people
with disabilities

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Issue 2

The Importance of an Active Lifestyle

Research has shown that engaging in an active and healthy lifestyle can reduce the risks of developing secondary conditions and life-threatening illnesses such as high blood pressure, cardiovascular disease, and diabetes. In addition, physical activity may ease anxiety and depression, improve mood, and foster a positive sense of well-being.

Despite the health benefits, North Dakotans with disabilities are at least 10% less likely to participate in physical activities than people without disabilities. In recent years, nearly 62% of all North Dakotans and 70% of North Dakotans with disabilities report being



overweight or obese (Muus, 2008). Adapting is nothing more than using your skills and natural creativity in a different way. In some cases, adapting may simply mean taking an ordinary object and turning it into an adaptive device.

According to the President's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports, people with disabilities are less likely to engage in regular moderate physical activity than people without disabilities, yet they have similar needs to promote their health and prevent unnecessary disease. Exercise can be done in various ways and can be adapted to individual needs.

- Physical activity need not be strenuous to achieve health benefits. Significant health benefits can be obtained with a moderate amount of physical activity, preferably daily and can be obtained in longer sessions of moderately intense activities (such as 30–40 minutes of wheeling oneself in a wheelchair) or in shorter sessions of more strenuous activities (such as 20 minutes of wheelchair basketball).

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Examples of adaptations:

- Elastic wrap may be used to assist with gripping free weights or to secure feet or hands to a bicycle, including a hand-pedaled bicycle.
- Seated volleyball allows the net to be shorter (3 ft off the ground) and the court is not as large as the typical court.
- Tennis can be adapted by shortening the court and allowing a couple of bounces.
- Wheelchair softball can be adapted by moving the bases closer together, allowing a larger softball, and "beep" baseball for people who are blind and visually impaired.
- Allow sitting for an aerobic, hand-weights class or golfing.

Note: People with disabilities should first consult a physician before beginning a program of physical activity to which they are unaccustomed.

Sources:

US DHHS, CDC, The President's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports. *Physical Activity and Health, Persons with Disabilities*. <http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/sgr/pdf/disab.pdf>

Muus, Kyle. (2008). *Health-Related Attributes of North Dakota Adults with Disabilities: Analysis of 2001-2006 BRFSS Data*. Grand Forks, ND: Center for Rural Health, University of North Dakota.

Disability and Health in New York State. <http://www.health.state.ny.us/nysdoh/prevent/main.htm>

Helpful Resource

The National Center on Physical Activity and Disability (NCPAD). The mission of the National Center on Physical Activity and Disability (NCPAD) is to promote substantial health benefits that can be gained from participating in regular physical activity. This site provides information and resources that can enable people with disabilities to become as physically active as they choose to be, visit www.ncpad.org

To receive this newsletter by email or in an alternative format, contact project staff at 1-800-233-1737 or kari.arrayan@minotstateu.edu



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Vision:

All people in ND have access to information and services they need to maintain good health and wellness. There are no health disparities between people with and without disabilities that are based solely on the presence of a disability.

Pay It Forward.....

Pass this on to others who may find this helpful.